

# FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the FCC unanimously adopted a Report and Order that established the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, a \$3.2 billion federal initiative to help lower the cost of high-speed internet for eligible households during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program was created by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. **This is a new program and information is being hastily compiled and distributed.** This document represents the best understanding of the program possible at this time.

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## When are EBB Program discounts available and how long will they last?

- Enrollment is not expected to open until the middle of April 2021
- Enrollment will close six months after the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that the pandemic emergency is over or when the \$3.2 billion appropriated by Congress has been exhausted, whichever comes first
- Providers must give customers at least a 30-day notice prior to the termination of discounts
- Once the EBB Program ends, customers must affirmatively “opt in” before being charged for service at the full, non-discounted rate

## Check in frequently, starting now with:

- Federal Communications Commission (FCC)  
888-225-5322  
[fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit)
- Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)  
(800) 234-9473  
<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/national-verifier>

## What are the EBB Program discounts?

### Broadband Internet Service Discount

- Monthly \$50 discount on broadband Internet service (\$75 discount on Tribal lands), per household, from a participating provider's rate schedule fixed on December 1, 2020.
  - Rates were fixed in 2020 to prevent providers from altering rates to their advantage.
  - Rates are before applicable taxes, etc.
- Discount applies to "bundled services" that include text messaging and voice mail, as well as to bundles that include modems, routers, hotspots, etc.
  - Not to bundles that include "video"
  - Not to bundles with conventional cable TV service
  - Discounts thus apparently apply to most cell phone service packages
- Discount also applies to "bulk billing" where broadband Internet service is included in monthly rent, such as for households in:
  - Mobile home parks
  - Apartment buildings
  - Low-income housing
  - Senior centers
  - Assisted living and nursing homes
  - For eligible households their monthly rent is reduced by the discount

Subscribers can apply for both Lifeline and EBB, and mix and match such as get phone on Lifeline and home internet with EBB or apply both discounts to home service. They can also sign with the same or different providers. Subscribers can switch providers at any time!
- Similarly, there may be "entities such as school districts, health care providers, assisted living or nursing facilities, and local governments who can/may purchase service 'in bulk' for eligible households."

### Connected Device Discount

- One time discount, per household, of up to \$100 for a connected device applies only to laptop computers, desktops or tablets, not to cell phones
  - Discount is once per household"
  - Household must contribute between \$10 and \$50 towards cost of device
- This can be a discount applied for router rented from an ISP
- Devices can only be provided by an ISP

## What broadband Internet services qualify for the EBB Program discount?

Any broadband Internet service that is delivered per the list below qualifies for the EBB Program discount:

- DSL (Digital Subscriber Loop)
- Cable
- Fiber
- Wireless
- Satellite
- BPL (Broadband Over Powerlines)
- Dial-up, if that is all that is available

Qualifications:

- The service must be faster than dial-up (unless dial-up is all that is available) otherwise there is no specific minimum speed requirement
- The service cannot be a "metered" service based primarily on a data allowance (e.g., one gigabyte for \$5)
- The discount is technology neutral - - any technology meeting the preceding qualifies

For a list of possible broadband Internet providers in Arizona contact:

- Connect Arizona at 602-529-1519 Weekdays 9am to 8pm

## What households are eligible for EBB Program discounts?

There are five ways a household can qualify for EBB Program discounts:

- 1) If one household member experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020, shown for example by:
  - Layoff or furlough notice
  - Applying for/receiving unemployment benefits

And the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers.
- 2) If one household member received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year
- 3) If one household member receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019- 2020 school year
- 4) If one household member meets the eligibility criteria for a participating broadband Internet service provider's EXISTING low-income or COVID-19 program  
**Also eligible for EBB: and they can get both!**
- 5) If one household member qualifies for the Lifeline program, typically by participating in one of the following benefits:
  - Medicaid
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
  - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit
  - Having an income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (currently calculated at \$17,388.00 per year)
  - On Tribal lands qualifying Tribal-specific federal assistance program

## What qualifies as a household?

- A “household” is broadly defined as “[A]ny individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address as one economic unit. An “economic unit” consists of all adult individuals contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household. A household may include related and unrelated persons. If an adult has no or minimal income, and lives with someone who provides financial support to him/her, both people shall be considered part of the same household. Children under the age of eighteen living with their parents or guardians are considered to be part of the same household as their parents or guardians.
  - For multiple qualifying <sup>↑</sup>independent households at same address, each household qualifies to get EBB Program discounts.   
 - For example, for multiple families in a homeless shelter, each can qualify
- Each household fills out an economic worksheet.  
Need to be over 18 or emancipated minor to apply.  
Household can receive benefit based on qualifying child or dependent = Benefit Qualifying Person (BQP)

## How does a household apply for EBB Program discounts?

Eligible households can enroll in two ways:

- 1) Through participating broadband Internet service providers directly
  - Discounts to households will be provided to households directly from the participating providers. Providers will be required to verify that households are eligible for the discounts, in order to be reimbursed by the federal program.
  - Internet service providers will take an active role in reaching out to consumers to explain the program, their offerings and how to apply.
  - For a list of possible broadband Internet providers in Arizona contact:
    - Connect Arizona at 602-529-1519 Weekdays 9am to 8pm
- 2) Through the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). See contact info below.

Please note that enrollment is not expected to open until the middle of April 2021. Check in frequently, starting now, with:

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888-225-5322  
[fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit)
- Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).  
(800) 234-9473  
<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/national-verifier>

## How does a household confirm EBB Program eligibility?

It appears there will be at least three ways to confirm eligibility.

- 1) A household may be able to establish eligibility using the National Verifier system prior to contacting internet service provider for enrollment. Approval from the provider should be quick once the household has confirmed eligibility with check USAC.
  - The National Verifier is managed by the United Service Administrative Company (USAC)
    - (800) 234-9473 <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/national-verifier>
  - It appears that the USAC network can automatically cross-check households receiving Medicaid, SNAP or other Federal benefits.
  
- 2) School-based eligibility verification: Schools may confirm for a provider that a student receives free or reduced-price meals.
  - This will be a major method of verification, building on the verification process some schools already use to confirm student's eligibility for discounted phone and broadband service (e.g. FCC Lifeline program). Sometimes entire schools, school districts can be deemed eligible for EBB Program discounts.
    - The EBB Program is sensitive<sup>to</sup> privacy concerns and to the need for parental consent to disclose student information
    - Again, this part of the program is still under development
  
- 3) The EBB Program will allow participating providers to develop and seek FCC approval for their own eligibility verification process.
  - It is unclear to what extent this will occur.

### NOTES ON ELIGIBILITY:

- Being behind in payment of existing service will not disqualify a household from receiving discounts through the EBB Program.
- Households receiving the Lifeline benefit can apply for and receive discounts through the EBB Program on top of their Lifeline benefit.
- A social security number will NOT be required to receive EBB Program benefits; alternate types of verification will be allowed.
- Schools may be able to have all of their students confirmed eligible.